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CONTACT: Susan Sullam (Cardin) 410-962-4436

Rachel MacKnight (Mikulski) 202-228-1122

February 11, 2011

CARDIN, MIKULSKI INTRODUCE C&O CANAL BILL TO CONTINUE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators **Benjamin L. Cardin** and **Barbara A. Mikulski** (D-MD) have introduced legislation to ensure the continued involvement of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Park Historical Park Advisory Commission in decisions that affect the C&O Canal National Historical Park. The C&O Canal National Historical Park is managed by the National Park Service (NPS), but the Advisory Commission was established 40 years ago to provide a vital link between the surrounding communities and the NPS in overseeing the operation, maintenance and restoration of the historic park.

“The Advisory Commission has become a model of how communities and the NPS can interact in a way that is beneficial to both,” said **Senator Cardin**, a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee. “Over the years, the Advisory Commission has provided an important bridge between the NPS and the communities and has helped provide much needed assistance and support in maintaining and improving the Park.”

“People have the right to have a say in what happens their own community,” **Senator Mikulski** said. “And it is the responsibility of the federal government to support a process that ensures the peoples’ voices are being heard. I am proud to help make sure that the communities along the C&O Canal National Historic Park will continue to have a say in the park’s future.”

The C&O Canal National Historical Park is 184 miles long and covers 20,000 acres winding north and west along the Potomac River from the heart of Washington D.C. to Cumberland, MD. The Park’s watered canal, contiguous towpath (which is popular among cyclists, backpackers, day hikers and runners), hundreds of historic structures and pre-Civil War-era towns like Hancock, Hagerstown, Harpers Ferry, Williamsport and Sharpsburg, all tell the story of how the C&O Canal once served as a crucial East/West commercial link. The Park also preserves pristine views of the Potomac River, evocative of the C&O Canal’s working days.

In 2009, more than 3.75 million people visited the C&O Canal National Historical Park, making it Maryland’s most popular National Park. Much of the Park’s success is attributed to the positive relationship and goodwill that has developed over the years between the NPS and the local community leaders through the Advisory Commission. The Advisory Commission was first established in 1971 as part of the *Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Development Act*. Every 10 years Congress must reauthorize the Advisory Commission, which has been reauthorized three times with overwhelming congressional support. The Advisory Commission operates at a nominal cost, serving in a purely advisory role to the National Park Service.

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